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The Adirondacks as a Compass of Ecological Morality

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Intro

Conservationists and environmental scientists alike have ushered in a new era of concern for sustainability, environmental justice, and a regard for our planet's ecosystems that has had an impact on both our value systems and our perception and awareness of the natural world around us. In the long span of time, before even understanding the consequences of our actions on the environment, human beings had begun to recognize and express a necessity and willingness to preserve the natural world around them. The justification of actions taken to preserve the environment have stemmed from a wide spectrum of moral, logical, and even spiritual implications and beliefs. In many respects this new justification stems from the irreverence that developed for wilderness, this paradigm occupied by human beings of seeing 'nature as other', a concept discussed by Wilderness Society fotunder Robert Marshall in *The Problem of the Wilderness* in 1930, and in Paul Schaefer's *Defending* the *Wilderness* in 1989.

Long-standing perpetuation of human existence as outside of nature, or separate from it, has made the exploitation of nature akin to instinct, with no need to think twice, as from birth we are no longer 'in' nature or a part of it as early humans were. Before humans erected physical barriers between themselves and the world around them, there could not have been a 'wilderness', as humans themselves were part of the wilderness, living within the greater global ecosystem. Once humans were able to erect physical barriers between themselves and the 'wild', a new metaphysical dimension was created for the human being – the difference between 'the scary outdoors' and the safe comfort of one's home. The state of the 'wilderness', of the planet as we are accustomed to it now is the result of this irreverence for nature, and from the scientific rationalization of the world around us into numbers, words and chemicals. Hence, as the most popular outlook, the newest 21st century model of conservation focuses on an esoteric, spiritual harmony with nature, with the 'Noble Savage' looked at as the purest way to live.

The question then, lies in why do individuals undertake, as a moral prerogative, the conservation of wildlife and the practice of sustainability? Particularly with respect to the modern day, conservation has become a publically righteous activity to partake in. The moral high-ground that is afforded to conservationists is natural, as many of the earliest proponents of eco-centrism and conservation include:

> "Thomas Jefferson, Henry Thoreau, Louis Agassiz, Herman Melville, Mark Twain, John Muir and William James, who have felt the compulsion of periodical retirements into the solitudes. Withdrawn from the contaminating notions of their neighbors, these thinkers have been able to meditate, unprejudiced by the immuring civilization." (Marshall, 3)

With transcendentalism laying the groundwork for what was to become the future of U.S. conservation, many of the ideas they translated into writing became the basis for ecological belief today (Schaefer, 51). This new worldview is based on a non-anthropocentric principle, basing our outstanding moral consensus for nature as something devoid of human intervention, yet including humanity as a direct byproduct of the natural world, our fate forever bound to the state of the planet. In this paper, I will build a chronology of the ways in which our relationship and understanding of the natural world around us has changed over time, how changes in our actions have reflected these changes in mindset, where they come from culturally or anthropologically, and whether or not our modern moral ecological imperative is in alignment with these worldviews.

- ## Conservation: Meanings and Motivations

To understand where humanity's relationship with nature is currently, building a timeline of what it has been is the first step to formulating context, which means understanding humans, and properly defining 'wilderness' and 'nature'. Robert Marshall, in '*The Problem with the Wilderness,*' defined 'wilderness' as:

> a region which contains no permanent inhabitants, possesses no possibility of conveyance by any mechanical means and is sufficiently spacious that a person in crossing it must have the experience of sleeping out. The dominant attributes of such an area are: first, that it requires anyone who exists

> in it to depend exclusively on his own effort for survival; and second, that it preserves as nearly as possible the primitive environment. This means that all roads, power transportation and settlements are barred. But trails, temporary shelters, which were common long before the advent of the white race, are entirely permissible.
>
> -- (Marshall, 141).

Evolutionarily speaking, all we are is a continuous flow of genes, hardwired to perpetuate that flow by millennia of evolution. The majority of the primary drives our reptilian brains are capable of are mainly the ones responsible for a litany of horror and atrocity throughout the course of human history. Throughout human history, fear has been a potent driving force behind human action, movement and belief. Though the fight-or-flight response guaranteed the most cautious of humans survived, it instilled into us the fear of that which eludes our understanding and control. Thus, much like virtually all other archetypes, or symbols and motifs found within the web of human oral tradition, belief and culture, what we consider 'nature' and 'the wilderness' is one of the biggest constants as a threatening, unknown force. It is no coincidence that in the New Testament, Jesus faced the Devil's temptation in the wilderness, people viewed it as a place that God could not control or see into, a symbol for chaos. A phenomenon dubbed 'frontier anxiety' persisted heavily from the 1890's when the U.S. Census declared the end of the frontier to the 1930's, a period characterized by rapid urbanization. (Limerick, Wrobel; 948). Oxymoronically, Frederick Jackson Turner's 1893 essay *The Significance of the Frontier in American History* put forth that the frontier was an integral part of American cultural identity, and in developing the image of the American entrepreneur. The end of the frontier represented the end of large-scale possibility, with all land being claimed. This led to monopolies, disorganization in the labor market, and economic stresses on those disenfranchised. Those anxieties that eventually faded evolved and became the anxieties of tomorrow, of the war.

So, in effect, what changed? Understanding the relationship that humans had with nature for the longest time, we begin to see what beliefs were departed from in the critical junction of the mid 19th century. Philosophers began defining systems of morality outside of religion, which meant that the use of natural resources had a different motivation to it other than the traditional view of dominance by holy virtue. Adam Smith's *The Wealth of Nations* is a keystone work in the mental shift of western thought about nature, and the principles of Smith's work helped fuel the image of the American entrepreneur, taking the land (as is supposedly rightfully his), and making himself rich off it. Such belief systems had been the status quo ever since the dawn of society, becoming something more akin to weeding your lawn as opposed to a test of faith against god-rejecting forest spirits, or the devil. Therefore, if wilderness was for all that time the dark, unknown place where control eluded humanity, what changed? If the values of mid 19th century Americans shifted that drastically, then there must be some obvious trail marks.

The earliest of these breadcrumbs left by 19th century philosophers coincide with the scientific revolution, which helped rationalize a large part of the world for common, superstitious folk. Science also helped curb the fear of lacking control, with logic explaining people's fears away, and previously unexplained phenomena becoming clear. Simply speaking, not only was the creation of the Forest Preserve and Adirondack Park due to a want to limit government control, it could only have been created by realizing at least some of the inherent value the tract of land has to offer. Respectively, philosophers Stephen Toulmin and George Edward Moore define ethics as: "Ethics is the providing of good reasons for choosing one course of moral action rather than another." (Toulmin), and "The primary and peculiar business of Ethics is the determination as to what things have intrinsic (inherent) value….". Obviously, any natural resource will have a material 'value', yet what philosophers argue for is '*Inherent Value*'. Founder of conceptual

pragmatism Clarence Irving Lewis ascribes '*Inherent Value'* as "An inherent value of an object is a property(s) of the subject conductive to the realization of positive value-quality in the presence of that object itself." To simplify, apart from any utilitarian value something has, is the good in-and-of-itself of that object, independent of use. Other examples of objects possessing this metaphysical value include loving human relationships, the fine arts, wisdom, and enlightenment or transcendence" (Slocombe, 2).

Some of the first intellectuals that we see writing on the value of conserving nature, natural resources, talking about man's place within the natural world include individuals such as George Perkins Marsh, Aldo Leopold, Verplanck Colvin and William James Stillman. Stillman, a Union College alumni, organized the 1848 philosophers' camp at Follensby pond, gathering his contemporaries on a site that is recognized to this day (Schlett, 30). Perkins Marsh spoke of the dangers of desertification in his 1864 work *Man and Nature.* Excessive deforestation is the leading cause of desertification, and the reason that Marsh predicted the United States would collapse, comparing them to the Roman Empire. Leopold, renowned even in places like the Soviet Union for his environmental work, wrote: "We abuse land because we regard it as a commodity belonging to us. When we see land as a community to which we belong, we may begin to use it with love and respect." (Foreword, *A Sand Country Almanac)*. Verplanck was first to be commissioned by the state to survey the Adirondacks, during which he made noted connections between wildlife and watershed stability (Schaefer, 24).

In one of his publications in *Nature Magazine*, original Wilderness Act author Howard Zahniser wrote:

> Many of us seldom get, or take, the opportunity to sense the magnitude of the whole scheme of Life of which we are only a part. We know only the rush of human events, and we seldom even challenge the presumption of those who call this rush the march of time. Only a few of those who are in the midst of this rush, and it includes us all, can ever be expected to break pace long enough to fall in step with the greater procession that moves through the natural seasons.

--(Zahniser)

Zahniser was very explicitly a man of faith and great conviction. He looked upon the Earth, particularly the Adirondacks, and saw the same beauty Muir and Thoreau saw:

> it is a bold thing for a human being who lives on the earth for just a few score years at the most to presume upon the Eternal and covet perpetuity for any of his undertakings. Yet we who concern ourselves with wilderness preservation are compelled to assume this boldness and with the courage of this particular undertaking of ours so to order our enterprise as to direct our efforts towards the perpetual – to project into the eternity of the future some of that precious unspoiled ecological inheritance that has come to us out of the eternity of the past. --Howard Zahniser, 1962

-- (Schaefer, 151)

In and of itself, the term 'wilderness' does not have one concrete meaning, being given value by humans, for humans. Robert Marshal wrote that at the time, the popular definition was ""a tract of solitude and savageness," a definition more poetic than explicit." (Marshall, 141). The transition from an old-world shift in beliefs into modern-day policy is a shift that took a hundred years, yet was the seminal root of the American environmental movement, as perspective of man's relationship with nature shifted towards the conservation we see today. Accordingly, as our sciences advanced we began breaking down the 'wilderness' into more and more concrete stratifications, labeling them as dynamic, ever-changing ecosystems. Ecosystems are more than the sum of their parts; "open systems that preserve their initial configuration of structure and behavior sans destructive events" (Slocombe, 1).

Looking at the world through this set of moral definitions, Program Director and Chair of the Board of the Resilience Alliance Brian Walker states:

> Conservationists should spend less time worrying about the persistence of particular plant or animal species and work to maintain the nature and diversity of ecosystem processes upon which entire species depend.

Humans, as the most sentient, thus have a duty to protect as many diverse and complex ecological systems as possible. At least, this is the idea that is meant to be represented.

Without looking at any of the spiritual or attaching ourselves to a moral outcome, let us first list what will happen if conservation and ecological diversity is abandoned, and an 'inaction' policy is adopted on climate change. We've witnessed the impact that climate change has on human populations, with the 2011 Arab Spring being attributed to resource exhaustion, and drought caused by the latest trend of every year being the hottest on record (Johnstone, Mazo). The country of Bangladesh is slated to entirely no longer exist by the end of the 21st century due to rising sea levels. These are all symptoms of an issue too large to handle, and at present, an inaction policy is exactly what the federal government has adopted, leaving it up to state and private-level investors to undertake renewable energy initiatives.

Historically, a well-known example of poor resource distribution is the 'Tragedy of the Commons', a term for a resource-sharing system developed by British economist William Forester Lloyd in the early 19th century. Lloyd cites the longtime issue of unregulated grazing in the forests of Britain, and often attached is the sentiment that via simple desire for efficiency of production for any unregulated resource the outcome "marginalizes the needs of natural ecosystems and fishing communities." (Clausen, Longo; 230). This theory gained widespread popularity starting in 1968, when American ecologist Garrett Hardin spoke extensively on the subject of resource allocation in *Science Magazine*. (Clausen, Longo; 234). Of course, if resources were not by definition a scarce good, then there would be no issues, yet it is not possible to simultaneously maximize both satisfaction, *and* the number of people who can benefit from any one given good, private-interest driven situation. As basic economic principles dictate, without proportional returns (replenishment), the marginal cost of supplying additional goods (lumber/grazing) comes at an incremental cost to the total amount of the good/resource (forest from which everyone benefits) in the long run (Foster).

Thus, the only outcome to expect out of a profit-maximizing system is the one that usually results in the destruction of real capital for indigenous populations, loss of biodiversity, quality of life, and quality of spiritual life (Scolombe, 4). Additionally, the most popular and necessary resource to private interests in forests – the lumber – is one of the largest sinks of CO2 in the world, and with everything from truck construction to transportation and processing, 50% of CO2 emissions via lumber are created before anyone shapes or uses the wood, and the shrinking of the CO2 sink is another marginal, continuously aggregating number. Of course, as less CO2 can be put into this sink, more will fall into the oceans and stay in our atmosphere, adversely affecting water resources, rates of bio productivity, and the ability of native plant species to retain control over territory and soil. We can easily incur that much like the Amazon rainforests are currently experiencing, the Adirondacks would have long disappeared if not for the establishment of the 'forever wild' clause, likely due to lack of foresight and aggressive over-logging.

So then, we ask the essential moral question: so, what? What if all the streams and lakes and ponds in the world dried up, and all animal diversity died out, dragging every piece of biodiversity? What do we care? Objectively, our existence as animals, specifically mammals, depend on Oxygen, warmth, nutrition and water, some of which have turned into legitimate consumer goods. The degradation of these resources, and by extension our world can, in effect, be the logical side of the argument to conserve. To clarify, logical aims are based on "factual moral reasons with the design of reaching ethical conclusions that will influence or change individual and political behavior. Such moral reasons should be adequately justified by supporting warrants or principles." (Scolombe, 5). As human beings, having sentience comes at a cost of feeling 'bad' when you know you're doing something 'wrong'. The overwhelming majority of people will wake up most days and try to be the nicest, most 'good' version of themselves they can be, yet their

motivations for doing so are not often authentic, and anthropocentric. Value theory is another way of measuring value, and allows a look at the different nuances of what humans find meaningful:

> Value theory is the warrant enabling factual argument leading to certain ethical conclusions, and is the usual test for the rightness of a conclusion… with the claim of a moral duty to protect and preserve ecosystem, axiological warrant(s) have not been sufficiently incorporated into the political commitments and legal codes of world societies.
>
> (Scolombe, 5)

A recognition of this lack of action brought an awakening to the effects that a sullied natural world would have is heavily evident at the turn of the nineteenth to twentieth centuries. Touched heavily upon by Roderick Frazier Nash in *Wilderness and the American Mind*, appreciation for the wilderness could only come once urbanization had set in.

> As the antipode of civilization, of cities, and of machines, wilderness could be associated with the virtues these entities lacked. In the primitive, specifically, many Americans detected the qualities of innocence, purity, cleanliness and morality which seemed on the verge of succumbing to utilitarianism and the surge of progress. (Nash, 157)

Whereas the boundary between had been pencil thin, it was now clearly defined and segregated. This echoes the writings of Aldo Leopold:

> It's inconceivable to me that an ethical relationship to the land can exist without love, respect and admiration, and a high regard for its value. By value, I of course mean something far broader than the mere economic value; I mean value in the philosophical sense" (Leopold)

A whole new brand of 'public goods' sprouted, such as clean air and water, as well as wilderness preserves, which merely by existing stimulated more spending as people flocked to them, which stimulated true, authentic interest in mountain sports, skiing and hiking, all passions of locals and visitors. Exposure to nature, means a deeper appreciation of it. The definition for 'wilderness' had undergone metamorphosis, yet the degree of separation between nature and humanity remained:

> There was a common understanding that humans have a place in history, an approach to understanding it that states we are somehow divorced from natural history. I'm in my 60's and that was pretty much unchallenged in that we have this set of disciplines over here, and over here is the

> natural world. I think it was very, very rare to have a teacher or a mentor tell you "No, no, no, no, it's the space right here in the middle that you have to pay attention to." – (Gibson)

The Adirondacks

As the United States' largest protected wilderness area, the New York Forest Preserve is a symbol of the determination presented by those earliest conservationists. In 1894, simple New York state citizens organized and voted amend the state's constitution, taking the land that is now known as the Adirondack Preserve away from any possibility of use, and into the hands of the state, securely protected by the will of the people and the constitution. Titled Section I of Article XIV, the law guarantees provision of the "Forever Wild" status to the Forest Preserve, giving it constitutional status. The idea of the Forest Preserve was coined in 1885 through Sections 7 and 8 of Chapter 283 of the constitution, after the founding of Yellowstone National Park in 1872 and Yosemite in 1890 (Ginsberg, 222). Becoming the first state forest preserve in the United States, the act safeguarded the natural resources of the park from commercial and private interests in the form of lumber barons, which had been benefitting off the 7-million-acre landmass for decades (Schaefer, xxvi).

- ### The Schenectady Mafia

Dozens of examples exist of undertakings by groups, communities, and outstanding individuals to again and again prevail against massively funded private interests have turned the park and its community into a living image of conservation itself. As the beginning of the 20th century came about, industrial need for resources kept skyrocketing, and the community of GE workers and Schenectady locals that Apperson had gathered to help with his cause hunkered down (Apperson Brown). In addition, any and all amendments that were allowed were extremely few and far between, and most of them being used to provide recreational areas for locals, including

ski trails and only 300 acres for the Adirondack Northway. Section 2 of the original 1894 constitution also allows for up to three percent of all park land to be allocated and used, as needed, to State watershed and municipal water development, additionally creating routes to large metropolitan areas as well roads and highways (Ginsberg, 225).

From the earliest establishment of the 'forever wild clause', the Adirondacks had plenty who wanted to both exploit it and protect it. In *Defending the Wilderness*, conservationist and lifelong wilderness leader Paul Schaefer lists his life's work, a collection of cases and battles against interests that would exploit the bounty of the park (Schaefer, 16). Schaefer was protégée to John S. Apperson, an official and engineer at the General Electric Company, whose passion for conservation was awakened after a hike up Mount Marcy, while exploring Lake George. In the early 1900s, John Apperson's love of Lake George turned the young General Electric employee into an environmental activist, as he witnessed firsthand the threats posed to the area by political nepotism, unending development, and mass squatting. As a passionate advocate, diligent worker, and skillful organizer, Apperson is credited with reshaping environmental politics for New York State and the nation (Apperson Brown, 2018).

Paul Schaefer, a young, aspiring conservationist, was mentored by John Apperson, a legend of the environmental movement. During the battle against New York's Closed Cabin Amendment in the 1930s, Apperson quickly recognized Schaefer's enthusiasm, patience, and innate ability to unite people in support of the cause. With these skills and invaluable guidance from both Apperson and Bob Marshall, founder of The Wilderness Society, Schaefer is now remembered as one of the key figures in the conservation movement.

The legacies that Apperson and Schaefer left behind have made the Adirondacks into what they are today, and extend beyond the park's physical boundaries. A few of the achievements of

subsequent leaders of New York's Forest Preserve, alongside many new non-profit organizations and community groups helped expand the Park's boundaries a multitude of times, and contributed to the formation of the APA (Adirondack Park Agency), as well as numerous natural areas and preserves around Niskayuna and Schenectady (Schaefer, 19-20).

Most importantly, Apperson and Schaefer have inspired generations of environmentalists. Apperson's lectures, retreats, articles, and mentoring, impacted many, including Schaefer. Schaefer's articles, books, and films also brought many to action. This research library itself is a testament to the dedication of public accessibility to environmental knowledge and stewardship. Dedicated volunteers, latterly the association known as *Protect the Adirondacks!*, have ensured Schaefer's Adirondack Research Center lives on.

Apperson's spontaneous 'awakenings' to passions of conservation and work in the wilderness are not uncommon in American literature and folklore, and frankly folklore all throughout human history. Whether it be the Buddha meditating in the wild under the same tree for 49 days, or Mohammed receiving god's wisdom on a mountaintop, humans tend to be at one with the cosmos. This value-quality contributes heavily to the perceived value of nature experienced by the philosophers that spent time with nature in its 'pure' state. The similarity shared between these men was their understanding of humanity as a part of nature, rather than its master: "A Citizen may not have the title to his home, but he does have an undivided deed to this Adirondack Land of solitude, and peace and tranquility." (Paul Schaefer as per Dave Gibson at Region 5 Land Acquisition Advisory Committee meeting, 1992). The Adirondacks are meant to belong to everyone, and especially themselves. Humanity's developed perception of control over nature can cloud that judgement. The forever wild amendment keeps the keystone American idea

of liberty and freedom and applies it to nature as an individual, granting every American equal access and opportunity to enjoy that which is equally accessible, and free, to everyone.

- ## Invasive Species

Invasive species were also a phenomenon not fully understood, as Schaefer's writings suggest that "Much of this prime land is being permanently lost as such, since after clear-cutting these lands commonly reproduce hardwoods instead of the original species." (Schaefer, 167). Many species of European, Asian and African plants, animals, insects, and just about every other form of living organism were introduced intentionally to meet a platitude of ends. The coniferous forests of the Adirondacks, as per the record, had little to none control on the amount of timber being extracted pre-1895, and no replenishment policies, or long-term strategies planned.

Because of the open land in the Adirondacks, new plant and animal species were either intentionally or unintentionally introduced into the Adirondacks. The impact that constant irresponsible interaction with wilderness has led to impacts that are felt now, over a century later. This adds to the struggle of defending native species against invasive ones, and managing legal suits simultaneously. Takeover of native areas can also lead to more infighting, as groups will often debate whether or not to allocate, clear, and maintain specialized tracts of land for native species, all the while going without the material resources that patch might contain. As noted by nash: "For Americans, especially, this kind of self-limitation does not come easily." (Nash, 257). As *homo sapiens*, we have, and currently are overseeing the deaths of as many as one-fifth of all animals on the planed within a century, potentially more given that we do not know when we pass tipping points. What can switch the context of preservation, from a shallow utilitarian approach to an authentic concern for an entire ecosystem?

Modern 'Wilderness'

What draws people to the wilderness? Why is it that every time summer comes around, mass human migration to nature occurs? The modern day is a developed pattern of people being born in urbanized, industrial places, and then retreating to the comfort of a forest or beach for vacation and recreation. This phenomenon is a calling that the old philosophers would deem a 'call of the wild'. Early hunter-gatherer tribes practiced sacred rituals out of respect for nature's power, ate only when hungry, and never starved due to a plethora of nutrient sources available in the wild, a stark contrast to today's carbohydrate madness.

In progressivist thought, it is theorized that civilization was brought on by the rise of agriculture, and that humans are better off now than ever before. Yet, when was the last time you heard of the Aboriginal people having crises of faith and writing existentialistic works on the absurdity of reality? Bushmen survive just fine in the Kalahari, with minimal time spent hunting and gathering, and plenty of leisure time (Diamond). Hunters and gatherers don't eat often, and waste nothing when they do, as the next meal has not yet been guaranteed. In stark contrast, the developed and developing worlds combined waste almost $1 trillion per year on food that will be leftover, the expiration date made irrationally early for legal reasons, or simply lost. Additionally, analyzing hair, bone and tooth samples from ancient hunter gatherer remains display entire communities in tip-top shape, with balanced nutrition.

One conclusion is that this natural lifestyle is the way humans are 'meant' to live, purely based on biological tools and capabilities, as opposed to the 'comfort' we've always been told society provides us. In an agricultural society stratification of social hierarchy is inevitable, as he who grows the most is richest and thus will eat the best, creating a 'better off' side and 'worse off' side to the outcome (Diamond). There is no such thing as 'social' anxiety in the tribe, only the possibility of being ostracized for taboo actions. There are no pressures or dependencies on gender

roles, as the group acts as one. Agriculture was a way to feed a rapidly expanding population, which tribal people avoided via infanticide, since being on the move with a child is far more taxing than staying in one place, allowing for more children and less risk on investment when food is guaranteed via crops. (Diamond)

As the popularity of the environmentalism reached mainstream society, the 80's were coming to a close, and dozens of newer environmental organizations specializing in education, publication, and awareness raising sprung up all over the nation, even more so aggressively in the Northeast:

> Environmentalism has grown beyond the publications of groups like the Sierra Club and the Audubon Society to become one of the hottest sources of new magazines. At least three publishers are betting that there is an untapped group of readers - and advertisers - interested in an independent mass-market magazine about the environment. "We are now entering full fledge into the environmental fad," said Samir A. Husni, a journalism professor at the University of Mississippi in Oxford, Miss., who specializes in studying new magazines. "It reminds me of all those science magazines that came out in the early 80's."… Another point of contention is the use of recycled and recyclable paper. Garbage is printed on a stock made mostly from recycled paper, while Buzzworm uses a thick, glossy stock that is not recycled nor recyclable.
>
> -- (Frietag, 1)

The already existing groups in the Adirondacks were expanding and diversifying, with the old guard on new disciples, much like John Apperson took on Paul Schaefer in 1931, taking on new disciples and making use of the expanding media to spread awareness. As horizons expanded and interests aligned, organizations merged, such as Protect the Adirondacks!, Inc. (PROTECT) in 2009, sprouting from the century-old Association for the Protection of the Adirondacks (AfPA, 1901-2009) and Residents' Committee to Protect the Adirondacks (RCPA). David Gibson, former executive director of both the AfPA and Protect the Adirondacks!, and current managing partner of Adirondack Wild speculated that society is more of a driving force of action than authenticity.

> "It's more socially driven, I would say. Broadly speaking. With many, many exceptions. I think its people looking at what their family, or their friends or their neighbors are doing, and they're thinking about it. You raise the spiritual… that comes to people at different times. But I wouldn't

> say its broad. Certainly, when it does come to you, its deep. But I think the social side is the most prevalent." (Gibson)

- ## Global Approaches and Concerns

The relationship between the Adirondacks and its inhabitants and protectors is a reflection of the world at large. As attitudes shift and generational changes take effect, population shifts and economic drives have impacted humans' relationship to their natural world. One of the most substantial of all modern pro-conservation commitments the United States undertook, and now is no longer doing so was the Paris Agreement, a document binding all signatories to be held responsible for lowering greenhouse gas emissions within their nation. President Donald Trump announced the withdrawal of the United States from the convention, slated to take place in late 2019 due to an initial 3-year binding agreement, whereupon expiry a nation may withdraw. The new millennia has seen environmental developments double down on themselves, as every year develops into the hottest on record, one after the other. Misinformation spreads like a virus in modern day media, with completely non-partisan issues becoming so polarized that the news has become impossible to watch. Information spheres have become toxic, and there is no exception made for ecological concerns, with climate deniers being granted repeated access to 'reputed' news organizations and schools.

Dealing with the right to openly spread misinformation, in it being an opinion, is constitutionally challenged, yet steps must be taken to mitigate individuals nonetheless. When asked about the media, and avoiding fake news in the modern day, Gibson replied: "What you believe is based on personal experience, and it really depends on your own depth of understanding the essentials. It's about challenging those people (climate deniers) in a respectful way, yet challenging them nonetheless. I think you can immediately determine whether or not someone has

a shallow understanding or not.". The American public no longer knows who to trust with getting information, and non-partisan issues are constantly turned into verbal bloodbaths.

Entrepreneurs across the world have taken it upon themselves to create initiatives that will reduce the populace's carbon footprint, marking the beginning of Green entrepreneurship. Some have positive overall impacts, such as the perpetuation of electric cars, solar roof tiles, panels or the creation of the LEED green building grading scale. Famous examples of those that do not have many positives include Richard Branson, founder of the Virgin Group and by extension, Virgin Airlines. Branson started his own airline company after allegedly being forced to wait in line too long in an airport. This all came in 2007, less than a year after he claimed he would commit the earnings of Virgin Trains and Virgin Atlantic (1.6 bil. pounds) for the next ten years to "fight global climate change" (Prudham, 1594). This was solidified by a 12.7-million-pound commitment for CO2 sequestering.

On the surface, green capitalism adds up as a mix of several facets of faith in the free market and its instruments (the invisible hand, inflation), and capital investment in combination with entrepreneurial spirit and innovation. This mix is what is aimed at addressing green problems. The premise of such a system is predicated on the idea that individual choice at the level of the consumer and investor can reconcile endless growth with sustainability. For his loud proclamation, Richard Branson was granted a lot of publicity, yet his own company has one of largest carbon footprints on earth, solely based on its nature as an airline company (Prudham, 1603). Branson did not invest any new financial resources into project, rather redirected funds from Virgin Airlines and Virgin Trains to Virgin Fuels, focusing on production of ethanol from corn. In reality, only under highly restrictive conditions will renewable change be possible under current market scheme (Prudham, 1605).

- ## Eco-services

Generally, eco-tourism revolves around the idea leisure travel with the goal of appreciating and enjoying the natural features of the landscape which the tourists will be enjoying, in a way that has the least negative impact for the environment itself possible. Eco-tourism has a sociocultural element, interacting with 'exotic' indigenous people with respect, in a way that benefits and respects them (West, Carrier; 486). Globally, around 157 to 236 million eco tourists yearly, produce around $30 billion. Eco tourism is about appreciation of nature, and eco tourists celebrate it, not causing the sort of degradation normal mass tourism does. West and Carrier are not all sold, however, and are skeptical of Eco-tourism and whether the even the ends are justifiable, let alone the means (West, Carrier; 485).

Authenticity is a phenomenon that eco-tourists concern themselves with heavily, but just like defining nature, with infinite ways to interpret it, the essence of what it means is difficult to pin down. 'Authentic' is thus looked at as the supposed primordial state of humans and the world that lays the framework for nature and the frontier, before they became 'civilized'. As noted in *Ecotourism and Authenticity*:

> "Because Nature is prior to humanity, it has implications for understandings of human history and the place of people in the world—understandings that feed back into ideas of Nature." (West, Carrier; 485)

This is noted as being potentially strenuous for those that run eco-tourism however, with native populations made to conform in order to simply make a profit to support themselves, undermining the bottom line of ecological preservation, which is preservation for preservation's sake, or to preserve the inherent value of our world. Eco-tourism's main objective, however, is the transformation of nature into a commodity or good to be marketed and sold. The Adirondacks faced a similar situation at the end of the 19th century, becoming the nation's top luxury getaway

area, with great hotels made from what was at hand, creating the 'Adirondack style'. This led to be one of the leading causes of the 'Forever Wild' act, as the squatters (which were diverse in economic background) abused forest land. Essentially, via the separation of man and nature, the category of 'exotic' becomes separate from what it would usually be: normal.

> Environments and people come to be recognizable only to the extent that they fit the generic categories "Nature," "Exotic," and "Simple." Aspects of environments and people that do not fit the categories are reduced to irrelevance (sea urchins in Montego Bay) or even hindrance (Maimafu decision making). This does not, however, mean that every place becomes the same, leveled by neoliberal market logic, any more than it means that local people are totally powerless. (West, Carrier; 491)

- ## Philosophy and "Deep Ecology"

A philosophy that starkly resonates with that of the philosophers of Follensby Pond, or the inherent value of nature and understanding man's place in it is deep ecology. This was the philosophy adopted by those that promote the inherent value of non-human life beyond the value that humans assign it. Over the mid-to-late 20th century, this philosophy was emphasized by some of the biggest names in conservation including *Silent Spring* author Rachel Carson and Paul E. Ehlrich, author of *The Population Bomb.* Paralleling these events was the taking over of Adirondack groups by Schaefer.

Discussing the topic of motivations and morality behind the now expanding culture of conservation, Gibson believed that in the modern day, as with many cultural and social phenomena:

> Conservation is more socially driven, I would say. Broadly speaking. With many, many exceptions. I think its people looking at what their family, or their friends or their neighbors are doing, and they're thinking about it. You raise the spiritual… but that comes to people at different times. But I wouldn't say its broad. Certainly, when it does come to you, its deep. But I think the social side is the most prevalent. (Gibson)

No matter how damaging societal pressures are, observations indicate that millennials are far more conscious of their environmental impact, carbon footprint, and lifestyle choices in relation

to the environment than any other generation. President of the South Adirondack Audubon Society John Loz stated in an e-mail interview:

> I think there are a lot of baby boomers who are trying to re-connect with the natural world, many of those who worked through the materialistic Yuppie years of the 80's. Being someone from the Generation X I have a perspective on younger adults of the Millennial generation who are paying attention to the environment a little more. Research has shown that Millennials are getting their driver's licenses later in life and not focusing so much on material wealth and getting a big house with a large perfectly lawns that is typically unusable for many animal species. They're living back in downtowns where there is already housing stock and working to make inner cities more connected with nature. (Loz, 2018)

Thinking on the good intensions of deep ecology, Gibson agreed that deep ecology is not applicable to the rest of the world as it is in the United States. This same argument is made by Ramachandra Guha, broken down into four critiques that he makes on the tenets of deep ecology, based on the perspective of those in the Third World. The **first** tenet is the belief that a shift to biocentrism from anthropocentrism is necessary for the environmental movement to preserve nature and its intrinsic worth. Guha states that the major issues facing the world are overconsumption of first world elites and growing militarization. None of these huge threats have anything to do with the bio-anthropocentric distinction, and thus are nothing but a distraction in the end. The **second** tenet lies in the importance of preservation and reservation of natural grounds, something that Guha deconstructs by saying that the interests of first world conservationists are likely in direct conflict with the simple farmer living in the Third World, and rather than being beneficial, distracts from other issues of state more prevalent in the Third World such as medicine or food shortages.

Guha's criticism of the **third** tenet comes from his soft-spoken summation that the adaptation of the eastern philosophies to the worldview of deep ecologists is subjecting their beliefs to the Noble Savage treatment. Guha's criticism weighs deeply on western society, as while those living close to wilderness may see themselves as a part of nature, those on the outside see the contents of the wilderness as a snow-globe, something they'd react to by saying 'neat'.

Perpetuating this is the **fourth** and final criticism made by Guha. The fourth tenet states that deep ecologists are "the vanguard of American and world environmentalism" (Guha, 74), yet to Guha, the combination of environmental protection and wildlife preservation should be two different matters. To Guha it is "A specifically American impulse" (Guha, 79) in essence stating that deep ecology is presented as far more radical of a school of ecological thought than it actually is, citing is as simply another feature of American consumer society: "as a consequence, the environmental solutions they articulate deeply involve questions of equity as well as economic and political redistribution, as opposed to fitting nature itself." (Guha, 81).

Modern-day media conditions the American system of belief to center around a certain culture, and the way life in the West is more mentally strenuous and damaging than ever before. According to The National Ambulatory Medical Care Survey (NAMCS), depression diagnoses in the U.S. have increased by 450% since 1987. Motivation and confidence across the board are at all-time lows among young people, as media hysteria and societal isolation ensconces then. Combined with a birth pattern that centers in urban population centers, and it is easy to see that young children are no longer exposed to the wilderness at the same rates. According to the census bureau, 80.7% of the U.S. population now lives in cities. This is a sharp contrast to pre-20th century U.S. trends, as city only exceeded rural populations in 1920. Currently urban centers, there are an average of 1,593.5 people per square mile, while density outside of cities sits at only 34.6 people per square mile (U.S. Census Bureau). Cutting off access to nature allows for an 'out of sight, out of mind' approach. If younger generations do not grow up around nature, they will not understand that something is fundamentally wrong when it goes missing, a main fear of conservationists today:

> Young people, they'll recycle, but they won't get involved. I'm now in my 60's. My organization is all white and Caucasian. Is that sustainable? No. We're worried about our survival, and if that's the case then its related, but we don't always look at each other and think 'it's time to change things up.' I still think we're doing good work, but with

> tremendous defects. Once in a while people join, which makes me happy, and I hope the expansion happens to us too, and it may. (Gibson)

This separation of nature beckons back to the original separation of nature and man, on a far larger, more aggressive scale. The communities in the Adirondacks are slowly losing infrastructure and people who want to live there, as young people move to cities to find better opportunity. The tradition of conservation, built for over a century is set to rest on the shoulders of the few if the present course of history does not change.

In *Children and Nature: Psychological, sociocultural and evolutionary investigations*, the impact that being in nature is reflected upon in human children. Children who spend time in nature are found to passively adapt to specific environmental hazards, and numerous authors have noted age-related differences within children when faced with nature (Kahn, 35). While there are not strong cultural cues that dictate preference for nature, a trend of romanticizing and separation occurs when a child is separated from nature, just like weekly bombings would eventually desensitize a child to terror attacks in a warzone (Kahn, 251). Kahn brands this phenomenon 'environmental intergenerational amnesia', asserting that in each successive generation, the degradation of the environment is normalized further and further, and outrage only arises when the relative disturbance to the environment is proportional to the rapidly degenerative norms:

> But now the problem is that people from the city, when they come up to these sorts of areas, they see trees that are 11 inches in diameter and think these are really good, healthy reasonable forests. What's their calibration? Their calibration is from urban settings, or much more devastated settings. So across generations as kids come of age in these more degraded conditions, they calibrate on these and think that this is normal and healthy. And if we don't solve the problem of this environmental, generational amnesia, I don't see how we're going solve the large issues. Because the problem is people don't recognize that there's a problem. And it's a psychological issue. You were asking, "what's the role of psychology in terms of natural history?" I think this is one role of psychology. If we can't recognize the problem, there's no way we're going to solve it. (Kahn, natural histories project)

Cronon states that this romanticized version of nature is one that cuts off humanity's ability to survive in it and don't allow ourselves to find an "ethical, sustainable, honorable" way to take

care of it, or find a place in it. The author places a priority on finding a way in which both our modern, urbanized life and nature can co-exist in our lives to this end in order to deepen our understanding of the natural world and to allow ourselves the opportunity to lessen the damage we have done to it. There wasn't a wilderness before the first city, because we WERE the wilderness, and we still are. This is why balance is necessary when considering lifestyle and society in regards to the environment, and not just the policies and legislations. Balance between urban and rural needs to be struck, as even authors such as Thoreau and Muir later on in life advocated for a balanced lifestyle, as the strengths and weaknesses of both cannot be seen without the other.

Whether the fact that the social health index dropped 45% between 1970 to 1995, despite a doubling of GDP has anything to do with the apparent moral amnesia afflicting the populace remains to be seen, yet regardless, by the definition of unaltered wilderness, we delude ourselves by thinking such a thing exists. Ever since the success of the Manhattan project and subsequent Trinity testing in 1945, not a single molecule of life on earth has gone at least slightly unaltered by the molecular-level changes done to the atmosphere and the environment.

> Why, for instance, is the "wilderness experience" so often conceived as a form of recreation best enjoyed? Why in the debates about pristine natural areas are "primitive" peoples idealized, even sentimentalized, until the moment they do something un-primitive, modern, and unnatural, and thereby fall from environmental grace? What are the consequences of a wilderness ideology that devalues productive labor and the very concrete knowledge that comes from working the land with one's own hands? All of these questions imply conflicts among different groups of people, conflicts that are obscured behind the deceptive clarity of "human" vs. "nonhuman." If in answering these knotty questions we resort to so simplistic an opposition, we are almost certain to ignore the very subtleties and complexities we need to understand. (Cronon, 85)

Pleasing every side of the argument will never be easy. S pite, or greed will always be a driving motive for at least some individuals, yet it does not seem impossible to be able to create an environment in which everyone can love what they do and do what they love, all while protecting biodiversity and sustaining the natural world. A perfect illustration are the fauna

bridges/tunnels being constructed across highways to help animals cross without risk of becoming roadkill, all while maintaining the appearance of their natural habitat, and interfering less with traffic. Everyone wins.

Conclusion

Since the day 'Forever Wild' was put in effect, a fight of fundamental human beliefs and ideologies has been going on. The overall future of the wilderness is more uncertain today in 2018 than ever before, despite existing regulations. Human expansion is not something that will stop any time in the near future, and resources will have to be made up to compensate. We are falling behind on the average person's accessibility to wilderness, and their freedom from pollutants and the noise of civilization. The least of our efforts can include bettering ourselves at being conscious of the ways we effect the environment, much like the Adirondack community has. Hunters in the Adirondacks have become staunch conservationists, wanting to protect their way of life, uphold the laws of responsible, limited hunting, and their favorite sport (Loz). Foresters now apply sustainable forestry, so the great bounty of the mountainsides remain fertile. Researchers and hunters working hand in hand in the Adirondacks are now repopulating the Spruce Grouse, which was nearly hunted out of existence, a dwindling number which is now being managed back upwards (Loz).

The human condition has led us to play God, and to point all fingers outward to find the blame. Once writing on his favorite illustration, late former president of the American Museum of Natural History Gardner D. Stout stated: "Can man survive? Of course, nature has its challenges, but the fear that makes us all tremble is the fear of man. There is a quote from Pogo, which states:

“We have met the enemy, and he is us.”, one of those ranging affirmations I will always treasure.” (Stout).

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